

Message Text

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SUBJ: PRESS REPORT: U.S. MILITARY REDUCTIONS IN THAILAND

USIA PASS IEA

1. DAILY ENGLISH- LANGUAGE THE NATION FRONTPAGED FOLLOWING ARTICLE
TODAY:

2. BEGIN TEXT. THAILAND HAS PROPOSED TO THE UNITED STATES THE
SIGNING OF AN AGREEMENT WHICH WILL PLACE ALL REMAINING AMERICAN
PERSONNEL AND FACILITIES UNDER COMPLETE THAI JURISDICTION,
INFORMED SOURCES TOLD THE NATION YESTERDAY. PARA THE PROPOSAL,
INITIATED BY THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, WAS RELAYED TO THE UNITED
STATES EMBASSY HERE ON FEB. 4. THE NOTE CALLS FOR A NEW ROUND
OF NEGOTIATIONS "IN DETAIL" ON THE EXACT NUMBER OF U.S. PERSONNEL
UNCLASSIFIED

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AND FACILITIES TO BE LEFT BEHIND FOLLOWING THE MARCH 20 DEADLINE
FOR A "TOTAL WITHDRAWAL" OF AMERICAN COMBAT UNITS FROM THAILAND.
PARA DESPITE THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S SUGGESTION TO KICK OFF THE
NEGOTIATIONS BEFORE MARCH 20, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAS SO FAR

FAILED TO PROVIDE AN OFFICIAL RESPONSE. PARA THE UNPRECEDENTED PROPOSAL INCLUDES PLACING ALL AMERICAN MILITARY FACILITIES, PERSONNEL UNDER THAI JURISDICTION AND ALL REMAINING AMERICAN MILITARY FACILITIES, INCLUDING THE HIGHLY SECRETIVE INTELLIGENCE MONITORING APPARATUS, UNDER DIRECT THAI CONTROL. PARA THE THAI PROPOSAL ALSO ENVISAGES PUTTING ALL PERSONNEL ATTACHED TO THE HITHERTO LITTLE-KNOWN NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY (NSA), OPERATING THREE INTELLIGENCE MONITORING UNITS IN THAILAND, UNDER STRICT CONTROL OF THE THAI GOVERNMENT. PARA THERE HAVE BEEN SUGGESTIONS IN THE CABINET-APPOINTED COMMITTEE REVIEWING THAI- AMERICAN RELATIONS, HEADED BY FOREIGN AFFAIRS UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE ANAN PANYARACHUN, THAT THE NSA OPERATIVES SHOULD BE HENCEFORTH TREATED LIKE ALL OTHER FOREIGN TECHNICIANS IN THAILAND. PARA ANOTHER PROPOSED PROVISION IN THE NEW AGREEMENT WOULD PROHIBIT THE UNITED STATES FROM USING THAI SOIL TO INTERVENE IN THE DOMESTIC AFFAIRS OF THAILAND'S NEIGHBORS. PARA AS THE THAI OFFICIALS SEE IT, THE PROPOSED AGREEMENT WOULD BE VALID FOR TWO YEARS, RENEWABLE ONLY WHEN THE THAI GOVERNMENT CONSIDERS IT BENEFICIAL TO THAILAND. PARE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND, MR. CHARLES WHITEHOUSE, DURING A MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CHATICHAI CHUNHAWAN EARLIER THIS MONTH WHEN THE THAI MESSAGE WAS HANDED OVER, WAS SAID TO HAVE QUESTIONED THE NECESSITY FOR A NEW AGREEMENT IN VIEW OF THE EXISTENCE OF OLD "AGREEMENTS." PARA INFORMED SOURCES SAID THE AMERICAN ENVOY ALSO POINTED OUT THAT IT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE FOR HIS GOVERNMENT TO REPLY TO THE THAI PROPOSAL BEFORE MARCH 20 BECAUSE OF THE EXTREME SIGNIFICANCE OF THE THAI SUGGESTION. PARA TAKING A TOUGH LINE, THE THAI FOREIGN MINISTRY WAS SAID TO HAVE INFORMED THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR THAT THAILAND VIEWED THE PROPOSED AGREEMENT AS A VERY IMPORTANT DOCUMENT, THE PRINCIPLE OF WHICH WOULD HAVE TO BE AGREED UPON BY BOTH GOVERNMENTS BEFORE DETAILS OF THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL COULD BE DISCUSSED. PARA AMERICAN AUTHORITIES, ACCORDING TO THE SOURCES, ATTACH GREAT IMPORTANCE -- AND SENSITIVENESS -- TO ITS NSA FACILITIES IN THAILAND BECAUSE THEY INCLUDE REDAR STATIONS, HIGH-POWERED ELECTRONIC MONITORING UNCLASSIFIED

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AND COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT, MOST OF WHICH ARE LOCATED AT THE RAMASUN CAMP IN UDORN THANI. PARA DISMANTLING OF SUCH FACILITIES -- OR ALLOWING THEM TO BE PUT UNDER DIRECT THAI CONTROL -- WOULD CREATE A BIG GAP OR TREMENDOUSLY REDUCE THE CAPABILITY OF THE U.S. GLOBAL MILITARY COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM. PARA THE U.S. IS ALSO KNOWN TO HAVE INFORMED THE THAI GOVERNMENT OF ITS INTENTION TO KEEP UTAPAO OPEN FOR AMERICAN OPERATIONS, PARTICULARLY FOR RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS TO DIEGO GARCIA. PARA THE ISSUE OVER NSA FACILITIES IN THAILAND WAS REPORTEDLY DISCUSSED BETWEEN MAJ. GEN. CHATICHAI AND U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER WHEN THE THAI FOREIGN MINISTER VISITED WASHINGTON LATE IN NOVEMBER LAST YEAR. PARA MR. KISSINGER WAS BELIEVED TO HAVE TOLD GEN. CHATICHAI THAT THE U.S. WAS

WILLING TO HAND OVER ITS MONITORING AND COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT TO THAILAND -- BUT DETAILS WOULD BE DISCUSSED AT A LATER DATE IN BANGKOK. SO FAR, NO NEGOTIATIONS ON THE ISSUE HAVE BEEN HELD. PARA THE RAMASUN CAMP. ACCORDING TO INFORMED SOURCES, HAS ENJOYED A "PRIVILEGED STATUS" COMPARED WITH OTHER BASES USED BY THE AMERICANS SO FAR. THE THAI SUPREME COMMAND, THE SOURCES SAID, HAD ENTERED INTO A "RADIO FIELD RESEARCH AGREEMENT" WITH THE PENTAGON PERMITTING AMERICAN AUTHORITIES TO HAVE COMPLETE, BOTH IN THEORY AND PRACTICE, CONTROL OVER THE STATION UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THE PENTAGON DEEMS IT APPROPRIATE TO HAND THE FACILITIES OVER TO THAILAND. PARA AT LEAST IN THEORY, ALL BASES SO FAR USED BY AMERICANS HAVE HAD A THAI COMMANDER SUPERVISING MILITARY ACTIVITIES. RAMASUN CAMP HAS HOWEVER BEEN AN EXCEPTION IN THIS CASE. PARA "THIS NEW PROPOSED AGREEMENT FROM THAILAND WILL REPLACE ALL OTHER AGREEMENTS OR UNDERSTANDINGS THAILAND HAS HAD WITH THE UNITED STATE," SAID A HIGH-RANKING FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL. PARA HE ADDED: "I WON'T DISCUSS THE NUMBER OF BASES OR MILITARY PERSONNEL THAILAND WILL NEGOTIATE WITH THE UNITED STATES. BUT THE PRINCIPLE IS THAT ALL BASES AND STATIONS WILL COME UNDER THAI JURISDICTION. UTAPAO, TOO, WILL HAVE TO GO COME MARCH 20. ANY CONTINUED AMERICAN PRESENCE WILL HAVE TO BENEFIT THAILAND." PARA THE THAI PROPOSAL WAS SUBMITTED TO THE U.S. EMBASSY SOON AFTER THE U.S. CONGRESSIONAL FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE DECIDED TO SLASH PROPOSED AMERICAN MILITARY "GRANTS" TO THAILAND FROM 572 TO 200 MILLION BAHT, REPRESENTING A MAJOR CUT OF MORE THAN 50 PERCENT. PARA THAI OFFICIALS HAVE ALSO DISMISSED AN AMERICAN CLAIM, BEING UNCLASSIFIED

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CIRCULATED IN BANGKOK, THAT THE THAI GOVERNMENT HAD AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO ALLOW ABOUT 3,000 U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL TO REMAIN IN THAILAND AFTER MARCH 20. PARA "UNTIL AND UNLESS THE U.S. EMBASSY GIVES US A REPLY TO OUR PROPOSED NEW AGREEMENT, NO DECISION WILL BE MADE ON THE SIZE OF REMAINING AMERICAN PRESENCE IN THAILAND," ANOTHER HIGH-RANKING OFFICIAL STRESSED YESTERDAY. END TEXT.

3. SAME ISSUE OF THE NATION CARRIED FOLLOWING EDITORIAL:

4. BEGIN TEXT. EVERYONE, WHO HAS FOLLOWED THE LONG AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE HERE, SHOULD BE AWARE OF THE FACT THAT THERE ARE SO MANY RAMIFICATIONS THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM TO FOLD THEIR TENTS AND VANISH IN DOUBLE-QUICK TIME. TRUE, THEIR WARPLANES, THEIR AIR FORCE PERSONNEL, AND SUCH OTHER COMBAT TROOPS THAT THEY MAY HAVE ON THAI SOIL HAVE BECOME USELESS BOTH TO THE UNITED STATES AND TO THAILAND. ACTUALLY, IT IS MORE OF A MILLSTONE AROUND OUR NECK BECAUSE IT HAS BECOME A HOT ISSUE WITH OUR COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS. PARA WE ARE SURE THAT THE LAST U.S. COMBAT PLANE AND THOSE MILITARY PERSONNEL WHO HAVE BEEN CONNECTED WITH THE INDOCHINA WAR WILL FLY OUT OF THAILAND ON OR BEFORE THE MARCH 20 DEADLINE.

BOTH COUNTRIES HAVE ACCEPTED THAT JUSMAG OR USMACTHAI WILL REMAIN TO MONITOR AND ADVISE ON U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THAILAND. BUT THE DETAILS ARE NOT KNOWN AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT OUR FOREIGN MINISTRY IS TRYING TO FIND OUT SO THAT IT CAN BE PUT ON PAPER. PARA WE STRONGLY BACK THE DEMAND OF OUR FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT ALL PAST AGREEMENTS -- ALMOST NONE EXIST BECAUSE THEY ARE EITHER VERBAL AGREEMENTS OR EXCHANGE OF LETTERS AT ONE LEVEL OR ANOTHER -- BE REVIEWED SO THAT A NEW AGREEMENT CAN BE REACHED AND A DOCUMENT PROPERLY DRAWN UP AND SIGNED BY BOTH PARTIES SO THAT EVERYONE WILL KNOW WHERE THEY STAND. PARA IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR THAILAND TO KNOW WHAT THE AMERICANS PROPOSE TO DO WITH THEIR PARAMILITARY FACILITIES. WE WILL MENTION ONLY TWO -- THE RAMASUN CAMP WHICH IS PART OF THE AMERICAN GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES AND, SECOND, THE POSSIBILITY OF USING THE UTAPAO AIRBASE FOR RECONNAISSANCE OVER THE INDIAN OCEAN AND FLIGHTS TO DIEGO GARCIA. PARA THE THAI INQUIRY IS QUITE SIMPLE AND IT IS NECESSARY FOR THE FOREIGN MINISTRY TO KNOW ABOUT ALL DETAILS BEFORE THE MARCH 20 PULLOUT. IT IS ALSO JUST AND RIGHT THAT THAILAND DEMANDS UNCLASSIFIED

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THAT THOSE FACILITIES LEFT BEHIND AND OPERATED BY AMERICANS COME UNDER THAI COMMAND. IT IS TRUE THAT THE FICTION HAS BEEN MAINTAINED UP THE NEW THAT IN ALL AMERICAN AIR BASES, THERE WAS A THAI OFFICER WHO WAS IN COMMAND -- BUT THAT WAS ONLY NOMINAL AND A FACE-SAVING MANEUVER. NOW WHAT THAILAND WANTS IS THAT A THAI BE EFFECTIVELY IN COMMAND. PARA ALL THIS WAS PUT BEFORE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR CHARLES WHITEHOUSE AS EARLY AS FEB. 4 THIS YEAR, BUT HE HAS PREVARICATED AND SAID THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO MEET THE FOREIGN MINISTRY DEMANDS BEFORE MARCH 20. SO FAR AS WE CAN SEE, THERE SHOULD BE NO DIFFICULTY AT ALL IN STATING THE AMERICAN SIDE OF THE CASE BEFORE THE DEADLINE. PARA THERE IS HOWEVER ONE IMPORTANT REASON THAT MAY MAKE THE AMERICANS PLAY FOR TIME. THEY KNOW VERY WELL THAT THEY ARE DEALING WITH A CARETAKER GOVERNMENT AND THEY MAY BE WORRIED ABOUT PUTTING ALL THE CARDS ON THE TABLE WITHOUT KNOWING, AS WE OURSELVES DON'T, WHO WILL FORM THE NEXT GOVERNMENT AND WITH WHOM THEY WILL BE DEALING. PARA BUT AS PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOJ HAS SHOWN WHEN HE OUSTED DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER TAVICH KLINPRATHUM, THIS IS AN EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT AND AS SUCH THE AMERICANS MAY FIND IT EASIER TO DEAL WITH THIS GOVERNMENT THAN WITH WHATEVER GOVERNMENT MAY TAKE POWER AFTER THE ELECTIONS. PARA WITH THEIR CREDIBILITY AT STAKE, THIS IS NOT THE TIME FOR THE AMERICANS TO PLAY IT CAGEY. END TEXT WHITEHOUSE

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